IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A method for use by at least one entity in participating in a collaborative information exchange with at least one other entity, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining annotation data, the annotation data comprising one or more links to information associated with the collaborative information exchange; and

transmitting at least a portion of the annotation data to the at least one other entity such that the at least one other entity may access at least a portion of the information associated with the collaborative information exchange by selecting at least one of the one or more links.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein selection of ~~a link~~ at least one of the one or more links permits the at least one other entity to access the information on a need basis.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~a link~~ at least one of the one or more links may be selected by the at least one other entity at a time not contemporaneous with the time of receipt of the annotation data.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the annotation data is schema-less.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of embedding information in a message transferred between the at least one entity and the at least one other entity.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the embedded information enables a status tracking function.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein at least a portion of the embedded information is employed to cause notification of one or more entities about a status or an action.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein the notification is in the form of an alert type.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein messages exchanged between the at least one entity and the at least one other entity are governed by one or more message exchange patterns.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the one or more message exchange patterns comprise at least one of a construct and a primitive.

11. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the one or more message exchange patterns control at least one of non-structural and non-deterministic information exchange flow.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the obtaining step further comprises retrieving the annotation data from storage.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the obtaining step further comprises generating the annotation data.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the annotation data comprises one or more of: (i) an indication of organizational data entities; (ii) a specification of collaborating entities; (iii) a specification of content type pertinent to the collaborating entities; (iv) a specification of access control information; (v) a specification of dependency information for the organizational data entities; and (vi) a specification of a type of business construct defining collaboration activity.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein at least a portion of the annotation data and status information embedded in a received message are used to determine an individual or an authority to be notified.

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the collaborative information exchange is performed in accordance with a design collaboration application.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein at least one collaborating entity communicates with the design collaboration application.

18. (Original) The method of claim 1, modifying at least one of the annotation data and organizational data, based on changes in at least one of project, task and people assignments.

19. (Original) Apparatus for use by at least one entity in participating in a collaborative information exchange with at least one other entity, the apparatus comprising:

a memory; and

at least one processor coupled to the memory and operative to: (i) obtain annotation data, the annotation data comprising one or more links to information associated with the collaborative information exchange; and (ii) transmit at least a portion of the annotation data to the at least one other entity such that the at least one other entity may access at least a portion of the information associated with the collaborative information exchange by selecting at least one of the one or more links.

20. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein selection of ~~a link~~ at least one of the one or more links permits the at least one other entity to access the information on a need basis.

21. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein ~~a link~~ at least one of the one or more links may be selected by the at least one other entity at a time not contemporaneous with the time of receipt of the annotation data.

22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the annotation data is schema-less.

23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the at least one processor is further operative to embed information in a message transferred between the at least one entity and the at least one other entity.

24. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein messages exchanged between the at least one entity and the at least one other entity are governed by one or more message exchange patterns.

25. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the obtaining operation further comprises retrieving the annotation data from storage.

26. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the obtaining operation further comprises generating the annotation data.

27. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the annotation data comprises one or more of: (i) an indication of organizational data entities; (ii) a specification of collaborating entities; (iii) a specification of content type pertinent to collaborating entities; (iv) a specification of access control information; (v) a specification of dependency information for organizational data entities; and (vi) a specification of a type of business construct defining collaboration activity.

28. (Original) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the collaborative information exchange is performed in accordance with a design collaboration application.

29. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture for use by at least one entity in participating in a collaborative information exchange with at least one other entity, comprising a ~~machine~~ computer readable storage medium containing one or more programs which when executed implement the steps of:

obtaining annotation data, the annotation data comprising one or more links to information associated with the collaborative information exchange; and

transmitting at least a portion of the annotation data to the at least one other entity such that the at least one other entity may access at least a portion of the information associated with the collaborative information exchange by selecting at least one of the one or more links.

30. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for use in participating in a collaborative information exchange between one entity and at least one other entity, the apparatus comprising:

an annotation data generation tool for generating annotation data, the annotation data comprising one or more links to information associated with the collaborative information exchange;

a collaborative directory coupled to the annotation data generation tool for storing the generated annotation data; and

an annotation data manager coupled to the collaborative directory for managing the annotation data such that the at least one other entity, upon receiving at least a portion of the annotation data from the one entity, may access at least a portion of the information associated with the collaborative information exchange by selecting at least one of the one or more links.

31. (Original) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein the annotation data manager is responsive to a collaboration pattern, the collaboration pattern representing iterative actions that may occur between the one entity and the at least one other entity.

32. (Original) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein the annotation data comprises a schema-less annotation structure.

33. (Original) The apparatus of claim 30, further comprising a web-based interface for use in participating in the collaborative information exchange.

34. (Original) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein the collaborative directory serves as a hub for managing collaborative resources of multiple organizations that use the hub as a central place to perform business collaboration.

35. (Original) A method of deploying a business collaboration system, the method comprising the steps of:

deploying at least one on-demand business collaboration hyperchain-based management apparatus for use in one or more of:

defining at least one business collaboration process template;

creating at least one set of data constructs;

selecting at least one other collaborating entity for information exchange capable of acting on at least one set of business constructs;

customizing a process template to support a selected set of business constructs; and

generating at least one set of activities in a business construct with initial collaborative data entities.

36. (Original) A method for providing a service, in accordance with a service provider, to allow at least one entity to participate in a collaborative information exchange with at least one other entity, the method comprising the steps of:

deploying a collaborative information exchange system that allows the at least one entity to: (i) obtain annotation data, the annotation data comprising one or more links to information associated with the collaborative information exchange; and (ii) transmit at least a portion of the annotation data to the at least one other entity such that the at least one other entity may access at least a portion of the information associated with the collaborative information exchange by selecting at least one of the one or more links.